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CARE AND CULTURE
OF
GERANIUMS
AND
PELARGONIUMS



BY

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CARE AND CULTURE

In as much as we are recognized as the largest growers of pelargoniums and geraniums, we take pleasure in submitting the following information on the care of these choice hybrids and many species to the "flower fancier." These flowers rank high in beauty. We hope this information on the care will assist you in solving your problems and thereby increase your enjoyment in the garden by the improvement of these lovely flowers.

Pelargoniums and geraniums are probably considered very "old fashioned" because their first species were discovered in South Africa during the sixteenth century, but ever-increasing beauty, size and range of color, have made these flowers tremendously popular, until at present they are "holding their own" in the front ranks of flowerdom. There is a great demand for them in the garden, home, patio and window-sills. They also are used upon trellises, popular as hedges, can be trained into tree standards, and used in many other various ways.

WATERING

Geraniums will thrive as no other flower, with much less care if it is the right care. The common varieties are, naturally, much easier to grow than those developed through hybridization, but their greater beauty is well worth the extra effort. Too much care, such as over-watering or a too-rich soil can be injurious to these plants. Geraniums are semi-desert plants, having originated in South Africa, therefore should be kept dry instead of wet, and watered only when the surface becomes dry, and then soak thoroughly. Keep plants moist, but do not allow the soil to become soggy. This applies to all the types of pelargoniums; but do not forget the pelargonium domesticum, pelargonium peltatum, and the pelargonium sweet-scented require more moisture than the pelargonium hortorum or zonale, the geranium; therefore can be planted in more shady places, so that watering too often can be avoided. During the summer months watering of potted plants, should be watched more carefully than those grown in the garden, especially if they are exposed to the full sun. Geraniums and pelargoniums can be grown in the full sun all the year round. After rains let plants dry thoroughly before watering again. This will prevent spotted-leaves, caused from too much moisture, which often appears during the winter months. Many persons think this a disease, but it is not. However, it is difficult to get rid of, once

it has started on the plant. Black-rot is also caused from too much water. This condition usually is fatal to geraniums and pelargoniums because sometimes it reaches the inside of the entire stem before the rotted condition is noticeable. As a rule it commences at the base of the root, just below the surface of the soil, and is a direct cause of too much moisture. During the spring and summer months, when the weather is warm, to produce more foliage and quick growth, plenty of water can be used, but this should never be done during the fall or winter when it is cold, and the plants are in a dormant stage. In hot dry climates a little peat can be used in the soil to prevent plants from drying.

FERTILIZER

The fertilizing of these plants is important. Pelargoniums and geraniums should at no time be grown in very rich soil. Certain diseases develop from too much fertilizer, and the plants will not bloom well, because more foliage will be produced when they are over-fed. A well-balance mixture of soil is needed in order to produce lovely plants all through the year. Never use a fresh rank manure. Be sure it is old and well decayed before mixing in soil, or placing near plants. Bone-meal is excellent for geraniums and pelargoniums for extra feeding, and a small portion of blood-meal is also good once or twice a year. There are many very fine fertilizers on the market today which are splendid for this purpose. Liquid fertilizer is fine for potted plants, and it is a good idea to give the plants a little drink of this mixed in water once a month during the spring and summer months. Fertilizer is not needed so frequently through the fall and winter months, as this is the time of the year the plants are in a dormant state. When feeding with liquid fertilizer dilute with water according to directions, also do this with blood-meal, so as not to burn the roots of the plants. Bone-meal may be used full strength. When using a fertilizer for feeding insert a teaspoonful or so at the edge of pot, in a small hole. When plants are young and just starting in a small sized pot, they do not require much fertilizer other than that which is mixed in the soil. When shifting plants never use too large a pot; about an inch at each shift is sufficient (three-inch to four-inch and so on). Before repotting place cracked pieces of pottery or gravel at the base of pot, for drainage. This is very necessary in pots larger than three-inch. Then place a small amount of soil over the cracked pieces, and on this put about a teaspoonful of bone-meal and blood-meal mixed together or some

other fertilizer (this amount to a four-inch pot, and a tablespoonful to a five-inch pot, etc.) then cover with another portion of soil, in order not to burn the roots of the plant. The pot is then ready for the plant which has been removed from its previous container. Soak thoroughly before re-setting in pot. Be sure to pot firmly, because a firm soil will produce a more stocky growth, also the plant will bloom better, than if it were planted too loosely, or in a too-rich soil. Always after potting or repotting a thorough soaking is necessary. When a plant is large enough to be placed in a five or six-inch pot it can be fed and watered more regularly.

SOIL MIXTURE

For a soil mixture for potted plants it is adviseable to use two parts of soil, one part of sand, one part of leaf-mold, one part of well-rotted manure and about a three-inch pot full of commercial fertilizer, to a bushel of soil. If a heavy soil is used, double amount of sand or leaf-mold is often necessary. Blood, bone and fish-meal may also be used.

INSECTS

Very few insects affect these hardy plants. Occasionally greenfly, mealy-bug, caterpillars or red-spiders become troublesome. White-fly sometimes gets on pelargonium domesticum, (Martha Washingtons) but this can be avoided if plants are not kept in too close an atmosphere or in glass houses during summer months. There are various excellent insecticides and sprays on the market, which are very efficacious for getting rid of these insects. About the best thing for red-spider is to syringe the plants with a very fine spray, and remove affected leaves and burn them, to avoid spreading. Caterpillars are annoying during the summer months, because they eat both leaves and buds, this making them quite a serious pest, and rather difficult to destroy because they lodge inside flowers and stem. It requires a great deal of patience to examine each plant and pick off these pests, but it seems about the only way to really destroy them. There is an excellent spray on the market which will destroy worms and caterpillars. For greenfly usually a tobacco fumigation is a very good remedy. Mealy-bugs can be prevented by getting rid of ants, and there are many ways in which to do this.

TRIMMING

It is adviseable to cut back all pelargoniums once a year. The best time for doing this is in the fall, either in September or October, but not later. If this is done

at the proper time each plant will produce an abundance of gorgeous blossoms in the early spring, lasting until the fall, when they should be trimmed again. Without proper care plants will produce smaller flowers, and not bloom profusely at any time, even during their blooming period. Geraniums do not require this particular attention, as do pelargoniums *domesticum*. They of course, remain much nicer plants if trimmed back occasionally, but it is not necessary to do this once a year, as it is with pelargoniums. During November and December it is adviseable to pinch out the tops or tips so as to produce lower growth. Geraniums bloom all year, and can be trimmed at almost any time, without any interference to their normal blooming. Do not place plants in entire shade as they will not bloom well and it will produce leggy growth.

CUT FLOWERS

Geraniums and pelargoniums do well as cut flowers, and are used a great deal for this purpose, because of their excellent lasting qualities. The falling of pelargonium petals can easily be prevented with a very simple remedy of gluing. Mix a small portion of gum-arabic with water and place one drop of this mixture with an eye-dropper into the center of each blossom. This has proven to be very satisfactory for pelargonium floral arrangements.

PROPAGATION

For propagating geranium and pelargonium cuttings, use more hardy wood, not a soft green shoot, because soft cuttings are most likely to rot, but be sure the wood is not too hard, for it will require a much longer time to root properly. Make cutting at least four to five inches long depending upon growth and habit of plant. Some of the more dwarf varieties can be cut much shorter. Cut just below the joint of desired cutting and insert in wet sand and pack well so as to keep firm. It requires from five to six weeks to have well rooted geranium cuttings, ready for pots, and sometimes it requires as long as two months for pelargoniums to root well. Of course, this depends upon the conditions under which they are propagated.

INDOOR PLANTS

When placing potted plants in rooms, select a light, airy place. Plants cannot thrive in dark rooms. It stands to reason they will lose their vegetation, in time, from lack of air and light. Never allow the mould at the top of pot to become sodden, because of too much water. Watch the mould of the plant and water when this

appears dry, then give a good soaking, for if moisture remains and the plant is watered again, it is likely to damp off, or an unhealthy condition will arise therefrom. Plants protected from heat and the rays of the full sun do not require much water either. Wash leaves occasionally, for this gives the plants a chance to breathe, and the leaves will not become yellow as they so frequently do. The oftener plants which are kept indoors are moved the better, and it is wise to turn the plants to different positions once in a while, so that the light reaches all parts of the plant. If convenient it is excellent to place the plants in the open air as often as possible, especially over-night, because the dew and evening air are so refreshing. It is well to remove decayed leaves as they appear. Sometimes moss is used on top of the pot, around the plant, this is unnecessary as well as harmful if placed too close to the stem of the plant, because it prevents a circulation which is so necessary for any plant grown in the close atmosphere of a room. Flowering plants can be kept in rooms all year providing they are properly cared for, and given the little attention they require of man.

DIFFERENT TYPES

There are six distinct types of pelargoniums. Geraniums are pelargoniums botanically speaking.

Pelargonium domesticum—better known as Martha or Lady Washington geraniums, the fancy or very showy type.

Pelargonium hortorum or *zonale*—better known as the geranium, the fish, horse-shoe or bedding type.

Pelargonium zonale—better known as the variegated geranium, the variegated-leaf type.

Pelargonium peltatum—better known as the ivy-leaved geranium is the trailing type.

Pelargonium scented—better known as the rose-geranium, the sweet-scented type.

Pelargonium cacti—better known as the cactus geranium, the thorned-stem type.

Yes, it is just as simple and interesting as it seems! With these few pointers to guide you, you should have no trouble in growing healthy beautiful pelargoniums and geraniums. We wish you pleasure and success.

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